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ABSTRACT

Actions which leaders of business, industry, and labor can take to promote the improvement of K-12 public education are presented in this brochure. The brochure is one of a series which offers specific ways in which different interest groups can respond to the eight broad action recommendations proposed by the Education Commission of the States' Task Force on Education for Economic Growth in their report, "Action for Excellence." The following areas are covered by the recommendations: (1) educational improvement plans; (2) partnerships between states and communities; (3) educational resources; (4) teacher improvement and recognition; (5) the student's academic experiences; (6) educational quality assurance; (7) educational leadership and management; and (8) services to students who are unserved or underserved. (DC)

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ACTIONS
FOR
BUSINESS, INDUSTRY and LABOR

Task Force on Education for Economic Growth

Education Commission of the States

EA015936

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WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The challenge facing leaders in every state of the union is to inspire a new generation of citizens to be even more productive and imaginative than the generations who made "American know-how" a standard of excellence around the world. Beyond inspiring them, leaders must ***empower*** them by providing an education system that fosters the necessary skills, imagination and commitment.

Unfortunately, report after report indicates that we have for too long ignored the obvious connection between a well educated work force and a productive, expanding economy. In addition, technological changes over the last two decades are outpacing the schools' capacity to address change. Skills we asked the schools to stress a few short years ago seem inadequate today. And as the demand for highly trained people has risen, the achievement of students — especially in high-demand skills such as analysis or problem-solving — has been declining.

Americans have every right to be proud of an education system like no other in its commitment to serve ***all*** citizens, not just a privileged few. Today many exemplary schools, colleges and universities are graduating students who are as well prepared as any in the world to face the challenges of the future. But our schools must be strengthened, if they are to do what they alone can do: bring about an American renaissance.

We are challenged to act now, each in our own way, to:

- **Establish** clear, compelling and widely agreed upon goals and priorities for improving education
- **Upgrade** our expectations for children and the skills required to meet those expectations
- **Collaborate** as never before — educators, governors, legislators, business and labor leaders and citizens — to strengthen the schools
- **Educate** ***all*** students in the skills essential to economic productivity and to the high quality of life a strong, growing economy can provide.

WHAT IS THE RESPONSE?

In December 1982, the Education Commission of the States established a national Task Force on Education for Economic Growth under the leadership of Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. Forty-one distinguished national leaders set these goals for the Task Force:

- Create national understanding of the need for a well educated work force and of the changing skills essential to economic growth
- Promote policies, programs and actions that national, state and local leaders can use to improve education
- Establish partnerships among leaders in communities, business, labor, government and education to improve education in ways that lead to economic growth and a higher quality of life for all Americans.

The Task Force has published ***Action for Excellence,*** a report on the condition of education today and a series of recommendations for leaders throughout the country. The Task Force's eight major recommendations appear below. Following each are some steps leaders can take to reaffirm a national commitment to our children and our economy.

WHAT ACTIONS CAN LEADERS TAKE?

As parents, employers — and in the broadest sense, as citizens — leaders of business, industry and labor already play important parts in education. Urgently needed now is concerted action by the business *community*. Drawing on its impressive resources, knowledge and ability to get things done, the business community can lead the improvement of education — through creative collaboration among organizations, across industries, within companies. Leaders may consider the following actions to renew programs already underway or to begin new educational improvement programs.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 1

Develop — and put into effect as promptly as possible — plans for improving education in the public schools from kindergarten through grade 12.

- Work with leaders in education and politics to create state plans on education for economic growth.
- Take part in state task forces on education.
- Be active in community efforts to improve schools.
- Take the initiative; offer to help plan for education.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 2

Create broader and more effective partnerships for improving education in the states and communities of the nation.

- Build new alliances with leaders in education and politics to meet the changing needs of education.
- Promote the cause of better education within companies and across companies.
- Share staff, training and expertise with schools:
  — Encourage employees to share expertise and to teach courses in the schools
  — Let teachers intern in business
  — Open up training programs to teachers and students.
- Expand opportunities for students and teachers to explore occupations:
  — Work with schools to customize job training for students
  — Sponsor teachers and school counselors in summer jobs so they can learn first-hand about employment opportunities and skills
  — Set up employment programs that allow students to earn academic credit as well as money
  — Encourage students to participate in programs like Junior Achievement.
- Help schools develop courses in skills that go beyond basics, for example, computer literacy, vocational skills, career awareness, business economics and communications.
- Serve on school boards.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 3

Marshal the resources which are essential for improving the public schools.

- Match the funds that parents and communities raise for school improvement.
- Give grants to libraries, nature and science museums, art museums and other institutions so they can help teach students.
- Loan or donate facilities and equipment to schools.
- Help schools integrate technology into the classroom and the curriculum; train school personnel and students to use new equipment.
- Lobby for legislation that improves schools.
- Insist that education have high priority in state and local budgets.
- Support a continuing federal role in education.
- Invest in the development of products schools can use.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 4

Express a new and higher regard for teachers and for the profession of teaching.

- Support improved programs for recruiting, training and paying teachers:
  — Advocate rewards for outstanding teachers and administrators
  — Encourage the expansion of career opportunities within teaching
  — Support paying teachers competitive salaries
  — Support full participation by teachers in decisions that affect classrooms.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 5

Make the academic experience more intense and more productive.

- Work with schools to reduce student absences and solve the dropout problem.
- Share resources with magnet schools, mentor programs and summer institutes.
- Recognize student achievement by sponsoring, for example, academic "olympics."
- Encourage states and school districts to restructure the school day or school year so students spend more time on learning.
- Define the skills students need in a changing economy.
- Support schools in helping students set high goals.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 6

Provide quality assurance in education.

- Let schools, students and the community know which skills productive employment requires.
- Encourage states to strengthen their requirements for certifying teachers and administrators and to modify requirements so people with special expertise can serve in the schools.
- Urge colleges and universities to raise entrance requirements.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 7

Improve leadership and management in the schools.

- Design training programs for teachers and administrators.
- Work with schools to improve personnel and management practices.
- Help schools streamline administrative procedures.
- Contract with schools to supply management or administrative services.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 8

Serve better those students who are now unserved or underserved.

- Support efforts to increase the representation of women and minorities in careers where they are underrepresented.
- Encourage programs that challenge gifted students.
- Support the broad and equitable distribution of educational resources so that no child is denied the possibility of becoming a productive member of society.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

The Task Force will continue to be active, promoting efforts to improve K-12 education and developing products that leaders of business and industry and other concerned groups can use to improve education for economic growth. For more information, contact:

Education Commission of the States
Suite 300
1860 Lincoln Street
Denver, CO 80295
(303) 830-3800

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